DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 139 SP 037 782

AUTHOR Dove, Jamie; Garten, Ted; Heinrichs, Ron; Hofmeister, David; Lamson, Sharon; Trumble, Angie

TITLE NCATE Accreditation: Strengthening Preparation by Involving Students.

PUB DATE 1998-02-00

NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (Dallas, TX, February 13-17, 1998).

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Accreditation (Institutions); Black Students; College Students; Consciousness Raising; *Cultural Awareness; Curriculum Development; *Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Development; Quality Control; *Student Participation; Student Teachers; Teacher Student Relationship

IDENTIFIERS Central Missouri State University

ABSTRACT

This paper cites ways to strengthen accreditation preparation and program design through student involvement, cites ongoing benefits of such involvement for the professional development of preservice teachers, and provides examples of student involvement in one regional university's accreditation processes. A student committee was formed at the university to publish a brochure, to give presentations, and to serve as peer information resources concerning National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) processes. They brainstormed questions that students might have about the process, then developed and distributed the brochure. A committee of 12 students collaborated with faculty to write a curriculum folio for a specialty organization. They worked with faculty over time to review syllabi and matrix specialty organization standards. The experience of matching the syllabi to standards was very beneficial to students because it taught them the complexities of planning and coordinating teacher education programs. Students consulted on the development of a diversity plan within the teacher education program. In response to student influence, faculty members traded visits with a historically black university which heightened awareness about African Americans and the types of support and programming they needed. The campus became known as one that supports culturally diverse students. Eight students presented performances which featured their action research, professional portfolios, and technology lessons, to the NCATE Board of Examiners. Both faculty and students considered student participation a positive experience. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 417 139

NCATE Accreditation: Strengthening Preparation by Involving Students

A Paper Written By:

Jamie Dove, Senior Student Leader
Ted Garten, Professor of Secondary Education
Ron Heinrichs, Professor of Health Education
David Hofmeister, Associate Professor of Elementary Education
Sharon Lamson, Professor of Elementary Education
Angie Trumble, Senior Student Leader

Presented At The

Annual Conference
Association of Teacher Educators
Dallas, Texas
February, 1998

Curriculum and Instruction Department
Central Missouri State University
Warrensburg, Missouri 64093
Phone: 660-543-4235
Fax: 660-543-4167
E-Mail: trg4235@cmsu2.cmsu.edu

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S Lamson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP037783

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NCATE Accreditation: Strengthening Preparation by Involving Students

Purpose of Presentation: This presentation is related to ATE's overall commitment to comprehensive and cohesive design of teacher education programs. The presentation will focus on the strands of partnership for mutual development, promising practices, and professional development for educators. The presentation will:

1. Cite ways accreditation preparation and program design can be strengthened through involvement of students.
2. Cite ongoing benefits of such involvement for the professional development of preservice teachers and teacher educators.
3. Provide examples of student involvement in accreditation processes.

The unit at this regional university was visited in spring, 1997, by an NCATE BOE Team for a continuing accreditation visit. The unit decided to involved students in the preparation process in meaningful ways. The unit believed that meaningful student involvement in the accreditation process would serve the following purposes:

1. Better prepare students for accreditation work in their employing school districts once they began their professional careers.
2. Provide real assistance with enhancing program quality, consistent with the unit's conceptual framework.
3. Simultaneously prepare the students to interact with the NCATE Board of Examiners team during the actual visit.

This paper presents four of the ways in which students were directly involved:

Guiding student information processes. A group of leaders of student organizations worked over an extended period of time to design means of communicating the conceptual framework to students. Key procedures were presentations to student groups and classes and a student-generated brochure.

Collaborating with faculty in writing a curriculum folio for a specialty organization. A group of students worked with a faculty member over an extended time to review syllabi and matrix specialty organization standards.

The diversity plan: students as consultants. Students worked with faculty over an extended period of time to identify the major components of the new diversity plan.

Conducting student performances for the BOE Team during the visit. Students presented performances which featured their action research, professional portfolios, and technology lessons.

Guiding Student Information Processes

The process of informing students about the NCATE accreditation began with a brainstorming session involving the department chair and two student leaders. During this session the students had the opportunity to ask questions and become knowledgeable about NCATE and the accreditation process. It was determined that in order to communicate with the teacher education student population, a committee of students should be formed. This committee's purpose was to publish a brochure, give presentations, and serve as information resources to their peers concerning the NCATE process. This action was chosen because it was felt that the students needed

a visual explanation which they could keep and refer back to when necessary. In addition, it was important to provide students with verbal explanations and opportunities to have their questions answered by knowledgeable peers.

The student committee was formed by seven student leaders from a variety of major areas/student groups. During the first meeting, this group of students brainstormed to determine questions which they thought the general student population would have about the NCATE accreditation process. It was decided that the brochure would be designed in a question and answer format. With the guidance of the department chair, the questions that had been raised by the committee were written and answered in an accurate manner.

A rough draft of the brochure was then printed and presented to the committee for review. The final draft was approved by the department chair and the brochure was then published. The next step was to distribute the brochures. This was done by having professors hand out and discuss the brochures during class. The student committee members also provided input during these discussions. The brochures were also distributed during student organization meetings and available at various locations in the education building and other related offices. In addition to the brochures and presentations, committee members also answered questions and provided information to their peers in informal settings.

The student committee was a very effective resource to provide information to the general student population. Educating the few committee members provided a link to many other students in order to provide them with accurate information about the NCATE accreditation process.

Student Collaboration with Faculty in Writing a Curriculum Folio

In the Fall of 1995 both the Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education folios needed to be written. Since the Early Childhood Education NAEYC standards had changed significantly from the 1991 visit and there had been no Elementary folio to submit in 1991, there was a great deal of work to be done to compare Central's program to the standards of the Learned Societies. As chair of both folio writing teams, it was my responsibility to establish a system for developing a matrix of comparison.

It became clear early in the process that one person could not do the job alone. The two other faculty members who had previously been involved were retiring and were not available for work on the folios. In an act that started out of desperation, but ended in valuable opportunities for all concerned, I invited students to participate in the comparison of our program to the two sets of standards.

Twelve students volunteered for the project. These students were all elementary majors, most were dual certification students in early childhood and elementary, and two were dual certification in middle school and elementary. They were all members of the senior elementary teaching strategies course, a course that students must take the semester prior to student teaching. As it turned out, from among all the student volunteers, they had taken all courses, except student teaching, being evaluated. Most courses, except student teaching, had been taken by several students. This made it much easier to interpret the official syllabi submitted for the comparisons to the standards. The students were able to explain the real life implementation of the

jargonistic descriptions. When it came time to clarify the syllabi, the students' comments helped the departments and faculty restate items more clearly.

The students came to campus one night per week for four weeks. They worked for several hours each evening. Each student was given two-to-four syllabi, depending on the length of the syllabi and the complexity of matching them to the standards. The students were also given a matrix of the standards, one for elementary education and one for early childhood education. Even though some courses would be part of both folios, the students completed the elementary standards before starting again with the same syllabi with the early childhood standards. The students identified the objectives from each syllabus that matched a standard and then recorded how the objectives were met in the course through activities and assessments. Their experiences in the courses were very helpful with this part of the task because they knew all the activities done in the courses and how many of the activities that supported the objectives were done, even if no points were attached to the activities. This kind of information was submitted to the various departments and professors to provide clarity in the syllabi for external readers.

The students received only pizza and soda as their remuneration for all their hard work. One student said that money could not begin to pay her for all she learned as she went through the process.

There were several positive benefits from this process mentioned by the students. They said they never fully realized that their programs in teacher education were so completely planned and coordinated across so many areas. Until they worked on the

matrixes, they never thought about the complexity and integratedness of the program. They just thought of it as courses the University said they had to take.

They never realized that faculty members had to practice what they preach in writing objectives and creating matching assessments and defined rubrics. They were amazed that even though many of the courses were the same for both elementary and early childhood, the course objectives met the very differing needs of these two certification levels. Finally, they said they had a fuller understanding of curriculum development and encouraged us to invite more students to be involved in a similar process. They felt much more capable of working on K-12 program accreditation after working on this project.

There were also positive benefits for our programs. It became clear that what we think we are teaching is not necessarily what the students think they are learning. Even if our objectives are clearly stated in educational jargon, the students take from the activities what they see and feel. It was also clear that there were unnecessary overlaps in certain kinds of activities and an absence of activities many of us thought were being done in someone else's class. We also learned that as faculty we need to come to some sort of agreement as to how to write objectives and match them with supporting activities and increase authentic assessments. The dialog that resulted from this process got the faculty more involved in the established Continuous Process Improvement movement on campus.

I learned that we are doing a good job with our students. As seniors, about to student teach, they understood the ramifications of accreditation and the importance of consistent standards. They were able to take this knowledge and transfer it to their

world with children in the public school setting. Our programs had prepared thoughtful, reflective preservice teachers. They were willing and able to discuss the issues of diversity, technology and exceptionalities in relationship to their certification preparations and to what they hoped to do in the schools. They could, and often did, spontaneously relate the standards to the objectives to our programs' theme STEP-Sound Theory into Effective Practice.

Finally, as a personal note, the work with the students brought me closer to them as individuals, but more importantly, closer to them as colleagues. I have always talked a good game about preparing students to join the ranks of the profession and that we would someday be colleagues. What I realized was that someday was now. They might be young and inexperienced, but they had a sense of idealism and passion about being teachers that we already shared. They had an expectation of what teacher education should be and were having difficulty with the face validity of some of it. We, professional educators, need to be more aware and responsive to the preservice students' needs and expectations if we want them to fulfill our expectations.

The Diversity Plan: Students as Consultants

The construction of the diversity plan to meet targeted levels of racial and ethnic diversity in the teacher education program is a significant and important endeavor. This task was intensified as the program realized an unmet standard in student diversity during a 1992 NCATE accreditation visit. This failure caused immediate strategic planning to address the recruitment processes in place and the climate issues that could be contributing to the minuscule number of students

considered diverse in teacher education. As the faculty in teacher education prepared for the continuing accreditation visit in 1997, recruitment and matriculation issues for diverse student populations remained as a major hurdle for the program to be considered completely successful in all areas of the review.

A Chronology

The first significant action taken to address the unmet standard was bringing a consultant to campus. Her presence was designed to help the faculty more fully understand human diversity related issues, to meet with the diversity of students in teacher education to assess the climate and other relevant issues that could contribute to their being low numbers, and to review the impact and potential success of ongoing recruitment programs. Associated with the consultant was a lead faculty position to work on diversity related issues program wide.

The consultant, Dr. Edwina Vold, recommended a number of specific actions including the development of a student organization composed of the few students representing human diversity. This group was started by a faculty member and a graduate student who had completed her work in the undergraduate program and is African American. Her work in establishing the group was successful and the group remained in place for a few years after her graduation. During the group's existence, the faculty member charged with the diversity standard worked with the members to better understand student needs.

Although the graduate student's actions sought a multicultural group, the diversity group developed as essentially a monocultural rather than inclusive student group. The reality was and is that there are too few culturally diverse students to

establish and maintain a critical mass in a multicultural group. Isolated Asian and Hispanic students infrequently attended the meetings of the largely African American group of students. The group's primary interests sought to influence the teacher education program more in its curricular focus and field experiences than by attracting additional students to the program. This approach tended to be self-serving rather than expansive. While NCATE addresses both issues, racial and ethnic diversity as well as climate, the numbers associated with diversity continue to be the fundamental focus during reviews of the CMSU teacher education program. Given the students' interest in addressing the climate toward human diversity within the program, this too was reflected by the faculty member's work.

In response to the students' influence, the lead faculty member along with his Dean and Department chair traveled to Jackson, Mississippi and worked with faculty at Jackson State University, an historically black university. In turn, a group of faculty from Jackson State visited Central Missouri State University and the end result was the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two schools.

The immediate impact of this relationship was to heighten faculty awareness about African Americans and the types of support and programming that facilitates their matriculation. This Memorandum of Understanding was initiated and maintained through special money allocated by the provost to invite faculty to campus. The special relationship with Jackson State also permitted calls for consultation and the door was open for their recommendations in a number of specific ways on campus. The faculty and especially the Dean of the School of Education at Jackson State helped CMSU grow in it ability to 0meet the needs of a diverse group of students.

Thus the consultant and the actions taken through the Memorandum of Understanding enabled a number of climate issues to be addressed within the program. One action was attracting graduate students from Jackson State as a part of the Memorandum of Understanding. A graduate student from Jackson State pursued his M.S.E. and Ed.S. in administration at Central. During his time on campus, he was supported with scholarships and in turn he contributed a great deal to Central in helping faculty to better understand the African American experience in the U.S. In teacher education, he worked to further the change process often in weekend and evening meetings that drew to a close in the early morning hours. Included in this work group was the Director of Diversity. These two men along with two Curriculum and Instruction department faculty spearheaded a student-oriented diversity plan. The value of his contributions were frequently recognized and although diligent efforts were made to keep a stream of graduate students coming from Jackson State, the efforts failed. This and other factors contributed to the Memorandum of Understanding losing its momentum as a change process.

The Ebb and Flow of Time

The work that supported the matriculation of students through teacher education simultaneously worked to undo the student group driving the changes. In the early to mid years in this decade, the CMSU campus had a number of active and strong African American and Mexican American leaders. Their success on campus in making changes is extensive. Yet, the short term impact of students on the long term agenda of a university is truly felt when leadership continues to `be strong and active. Within the teacher education program, the student leaders graduated, and they were

replaced by really nice students who had more difficulty maintaining a functional group.

As the student group sputtered three years after its start, the NCATE needs increased significantly with a continuing accreditation visit planned for 1997. Diverse numbers of students grew, albeit slowly. The percent of students self-identified as ethnically or racially diverse increased from 3% to 6%. While such growth helped to encourage those working on diversity Issues and plans, it was clear that the recruitment efforts were falling short.

The program's diversity planning sought to increase student numbers by attracting them to campus. This approach was largely supported by the students in the program. It was what they knew, and they would benefit, if only indirectly, by having larger numbers of culturally diverse students within the on-campus teacher education program. Admissions programs continued to work hard for this recruitment agenda, and thousands of dollars were and are being spent to attract a culturally diverse population to campus and into teacher education. Is this approach working?

The geographic location of the campus makes it an attractive place for culturally diverse students who desire a smaller town experience. Students are generally recognize ed if not known on campus, and this contributes to a caring, helpful environment. It was this type of place that historically attracted African American students to CMSU. The faculty and their interest in the students help matriculate students to reach their personal and professional goals. Consequently, CMSU has maintained a reputation as a school that supports culturally diverse students on their campus.

What Now?

The teacher education students helped to further shape the climate issues within the program. This action coupled with some special recruitment programming through admissions, bridge programs to attract students to the campus during the summer, and a special high school career class about being a teacher failed to attract sufficient numbers of diverse students into teacher Education to meet the NCATE standard. Why? Exact answers have not been researched.

However, CMSU is like many other universities with diverse populations across many different programs. Students who are willing to devote four or more years to accomplish educational goals do not often select teaching as a profession when there are other better paying jobs who also recruit diverse student populations. Teachers are very special people. Students who want to become teachers must also have the special attributes of teaching within them to want to spend a work day plus additional time with children rather than adults, earn less money than others who complete degrees, and face a work environment where appreciation for one's efforts are not fully expressed.

This aside, the diversity plan and the influence students had on it increased students numbers rather significantly. Among traditional students, the plan has elements of success. Yet, the changing nature of the work place, the needs of non-traditional students, and the limits of any one program without additional funding for more faculty and travel are real limits to successful recruitment efforts. Couple the demands of NCATE in this area along with its other agenda items in technology and performance assessment and there is more than enough work for faculty who also

teach classes, provide service to the university, and commit to scholarship and research.

As the diversity plan moves forward and recruitment and matriculation efforts continue to attract diverse student groups, the above issues that interfere with committing more and more resources to building a culturally and racially diverse teacher education program will be addressed in one manner or another. The ability of a teacher education program to hear, respond, and maintain a learning curve addressing the needs and desires of the culturally diverse student will be one that effectively helps build a group of teachers for the 21st century.

Student Performances for the Board of Examiners Team

In an attempt to verify that curriculum objectives were being accomplished, it seemed logical to have students demonstrate what they learned. There was a concern expressed as to whether time was sufficient during the BOE visit to allot to student performances. After some careful planning, it was determined that 75 minutes would be made available for student performances and a time and date determined. A faculty member was appointed to plan and orchestrate this presentation. Teacher Education Faculty were asked to nominate students from the previous semester who would be willing to make an 8-10 minute presentation on any action research, professional portfolio, or technology lesson they had prepared as a part of a class.

After names were submitted for students who agreed, and whose schedules would allow them the time to commit to this task, a selection effort was made for gender, ethnicity, and curriculum representation. Eight students were contacted and asked to

attend a briefing on the presentation format. Each student was asked to include in their presentation their name, classification, course title, the purpose of the assignment, a brief description , results, and allow for questions that may be asked by the BOE TEAM. Students were familiarized with the setting, the order of their presentation, and the purpose of their performances. In general, the students were quite proud and enthused to have been chosen for this task.

Two members of the BOE Team came to the presentation that was held in acomputer lab. The BOE was given a program with each student's name, home town, and title of the presentation. Two elementary education students reported the action research they completed during their student teaching experience. One of these students had just been named the recipient of the Charno Award, the outstanding female graduating senior. Two secondary education students reported on research they participated in with their professor. They were very proud of the fact that the research had been submitted and accepted for publication. Two students demonstrated their professional portfolios that they had prepared. Each of them had applied for jobs with their portfolios and both had received contract offers and had other opportunities pending. They indicated that the portfolio was a decided advantage in securing a job. Two secondary students prepared an electronic presentation as a part of their educational technology classes. These electronic presentations were very impressive leaving the BOE with no questions just amazement. By the end of the day, the two members of the BOE sent hand written thank you notes, by way of the faculty member in charge, to each of the students who had given a presentation.

The perceived benefits of student performances in the accreditation process were as follows:

1. The BOE Team saw the written curriculum come alive with examples of quality student work and accomplishments.
2. Selected students felt special for having been chosen and for being an integral part of the accreditation process.
3. Participating students were enlightened with accomplishments of what students had done in other disciplines.
4. Faculty in attendance were very proud of the excellent performance of the students and the cordial response of the BOE.

Conclusion

Faculty members who involved students in developing accreditation components found the experience to be very positive. The students brought fresh eyes to the tasks at hand, generated new ideas, and developed a real concern for their program and what the faculty were trying to do to ensure that they became quality teachers and that Central's NCATE accreditation was continued. All of the involvement helped immeasurably in building a pervasive readiness in the student body to interact with the team. The writers look forward to examining in a future study the level of involvement these students assume as their school districts engage in state accreditation activity.